

# Canadian ART



CANADIAN ARMY ART EXHIBITION  
AN ARTIST ON THE ITALIAN FRONT  
CANADIAN GROUP OF PAINTERS—1944

OTTAWA

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# Canadian ART

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Vol. I

APRIL - MAY, 1944

No. 4

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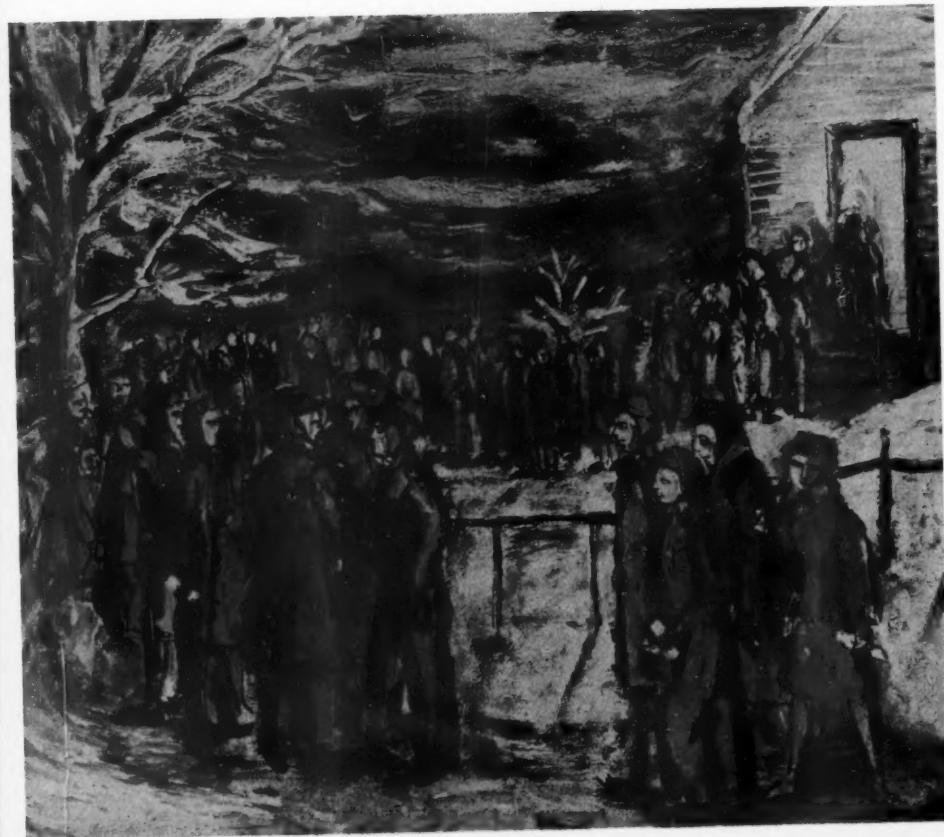
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THE PRIZE WINNERS. *Above*, first prize: BRUNO BOBAK, Sapper, R.C.E., *Cross Country Convoy*. Water colour. Purchased by Hart House. *Upper left*, second prize: ROBERT BRUCE, L/Corporal, P.R.O., *On Your Own Time*. Mixed medium. *Lower left*, third prize: MOLLY LAMB, Private, C.W.A.C., *Meal Parade, Hamilton Trade School*. Oil.

## CANADIAN ARMY ART EXHIBITION AN EDITORIAL REVIEW

THE Canadian Army Art Exhibition, which opened at the National Gallery on March 21 and which will later tour the country, is a stimulating event. From the point of view of the relation between art and society, it constitutes a milestone. Perhaps for the first time in the history of Canada, an official government agency, in this case the Army, has invited a cross-section of the Canadian people—the enlisted personnel—to draw and paint its reactions to a phase of contemporary life, to enter its work in a national competition, and to exhibit the results at the National Gallery. Such advances toward a national people's culture are among the most heartening by-products of a world at war in the cause of democracy.

Judging by the attendance, the artist may learn one thought-provoking lesson

from the exhibition, namely that the public, so often indifferent to art for art's sake, is definitely interested in art which reflects its own activities. On the night of the official opening, the National Gallery was crowded to capacity with representatives of the services, the government, and the general public. The band of the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps provided music; the Hon. J. L. Ralston, Minister of Defence, and His Excellency, the Governor General, both gave addresses, and the Princess Alice graced the occasion by her presence. Attendance subsequent to the opening has been high. The Army and the society behind it have come to art, at least in part, because art first went to the Army. If similar connections can be built with the social agencies of peace, both official and unofficial, art will never lack communal support.

On the purely artistic plane, the exhibition offers two surprises. It is unexpectedly high in its general level of attainment and unexpectedly modern in its predominant point of view. In this connection one must recall that the pictures exhibited were made by rank and file members of the Army, as a leisure-hour pursuit after military duties. The work of the Army's official war artists, who were selected from professional ranks to give their entire time to painting, is not included in the present exhibition. Yet taken as a whole, the exhibition compares well in quality with the average annual shows of most of the regular Canadian art societies. In addition, many of the entries reveal touches of humour, spontaneity, *insouciance*, which are a relief from the tension of our times and which make art seem a wholesomely casual part of daily living.

The dominance of a relatively modern point of view suggests that the country, or at least the younger art-minded section of the country, is more contemporary in its outlook than we had realized. To be sure the exhibition includes some work of a traditional nature. There is in fact something to please everybody, whether the observer likes his art conventional or experimental, delicate or vigorous, sweet or with a touch of satire. But the preponderance is distinctly "modern" and the judges—A. Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, Henri Masson and H. O. McCurry—favoured this modern trend in making their awards. As a result, the more advanced outlook in Canadian art is certain to receive encouragement from the present exhibition.

The prize winners and one of the honourable mentions are reproduced among our illustrations and need not be enumerated here. Five additional honourable mentions were awarded as follows: to Sapper Harry Aslin, R.C.E., for his water colour, *Bridging*; to Gunner Samuel Goodman, R.C.A., for his ink drawing, *The Shoot*; to Private Molly Lamb, C.W.A.C., for her pencil draw-

ing, *Dinner Parade*; to Private Ernest A. Harris, C.M.S.C., for his ink drawing, *Mess Hall*, and to Bombardier Donald Sexton, R.C.A., for his oil painting, *Sessions at the Legion*.

Special credit for the success of the exhibition should go to Sergeant Charles Redfern, attached to the Directorate of Auxiliary Services (Army), who was immediately responsible for organizing the project. Sergeant Redfern is himself a young artist of promise. In organizing the Army show, he of course received nation-wide co-operation, including the advice and facilities of the National Gallery, the help of District Auxiliary Services Officers, and the assistance of preliminary judging committees chosen from the ranks of professional artists within each military district. The exhibition could hardly have been what it is, however, had not the whole undertaking been co-ordinated by a director thoroughly at home in the field of art.

These positive aspects of the Army exhibition need not obscure the fact that there are still problems to be considered in connection with future projects of this kind; problems not so much of intrinsic art quality as of cultural background. In the first place, any exhibition which is predominantly modern is bound to raise difficulties of appreciation. The link between art and the Army brings crowds to the present exhibition, but it does not necessarily enable them to enjoy and appreciate all that they see when they get there. To most people, modern art, whether it relate to the Army or to anything else, is bewildering. The average soldier and the average layman are both surprised to find the awards going to work of a type which, in some cases, they do not understand, while the more traditional and easily comprehensible pictures pass unrecognized by the judges. A good many visitors are thrown back upon the rather comfortless ground of being forced to admit that apparently they "know nothing about art." If art is to solidify its wartime public relations and build



NORMAN KUCHARSKY, Sapper,  
R.C.E., *Sally Ann, Petawawa*  
Water colour

DONALD SEXTON, Bombardier,  
R.C.A. *The Toastmakers*  
Water colour





BRUNO BOBAK, Sapp  
R.C.E. Winter Scene  
Petawawa. Water colour. Purchased  
H.R.H. The Prince  
Alice.

them into a permanent sustaining foundation, it must not only produce work of merit, but must find some way of helping the public to understand what it produces. There is here an important, unsolved, educational problem.

Existing cultural conditions being what they are, it is possible that there should be several series of awards in connection with exhibitions like the present one. A jury of artists might continue to select what it considers the best work from the purely artistic standpoint. A jury of military men might make a second series of awards for what it considers the best interpretations of military life. A third series, awarded by popular vote, might be given to those pictures which make the greatest appeal to the general public. On such a basis everybody should be happy, since everybody's point of view would receive recognition. The expression and mutual consideration of different points of view is always healthy in a democracy.

A second problem centres around the matter of creative participation. The

high standard of the Army exhibition is a result of its having been judged by professional artists according to professional standards. The negative aspect of this otherwise commendable situation is that only those artists whose work approaches professional standards have been accepted for showing. This gives a real opportunity for enlisted personnel who, in peace time, are either artists or serious art students, but it largely eliminates the work of the soldier who turns to art merely as a hobby. In other words it discourages, or at any rate does not encourage the general use of art as a creative recreation. This use of art is an important one. We suggest that it deserves some form of recognition. Possibly future exhibitions might include several sections, ranging from amateur to professional grade. Or perhaps different exhibitions could be held at different times, some to show work of high intrinsic merit, others to stimulate the recreational and morale-building aspects of creative hobbies.—W.A.



FRANK HAZLEHURST, Sergeant,  
R.C.C.S. C-91051. Water colour.  
See also *Gun Crew* by the same  
artist on cover.

TOM MILLER, Sergeant,  
R.C.E. Nurse Campsall.  
Pastel.



# THE ACADEMY AND THE FUTURE OF ART IN CANADA

BY L. A. C. PANTON, R.C.A.

FEW debates have flourished so long and so lustily as that which concerns academies of art. Few institutions have excited in their critics so much wrath or disdain, or in their friends so strong a resentment of these critics. Few contests, moreover, have been less productive of either compromise or tolerance in their conclusions.

Arthur Lismer, in a recent criticism of the Royal Canadian Academy, attempted, on the whole fairly and with some success, to demolish any claim to leadership that it might make. His charges are the inescapable corollary to a pattern of continued failure of academies everywhere to adjust themselves, at the right time and with vision and courage, to the swift surge of new and vigorous movements which reflect the technical and social advances of today. It is a pattern born of timidity and bewilderment, culminating, in the R.C.A., in a policy of exclusion which seeks to halt the inevitable invasion with the imperious gesture of a Canute.

The R.C.A. has lost prestige and friends. The disagreement between the "haves" and the "have-nots" has deteriorated into an implacable animosity. Nonconformist societies dedicated to the new creeds and to the destruction of the conservative stronghold now seek, with the aid of the press and ambitious galleries, to shift the artistic centre of gravity to a stronghold of their own.

Like Mr. Lismer, many other members of the Academy have themselves realised its impotence, in recent years, to function as it was designed to do, and have not hesitated to point out its defects. But it is easier to tear down an institution than to build it up; its disappear-

ance from the scene would be no help to Canadian art, and might be followed by the formation of some other body with autocratic claims to a similarly disputed authority. The present decline of the Academy is to be read as only a symptom of the general distress which troubles Canadian artists—few in number as they are, widely scattered geographically, still incoherent as a group, and responsive to so many contrary influences that little or no distinct trend in their expression is discernible. From out of this ferment a mature art will come no doubt, but it is too early yet to predict what art of today will survive, or from what portion of it the future art will grow.

The affliction which besets Canadian art is not that the Academy ignores its purposes or discriminates against those with whom it disagrees, but that art itself is ignored by people generally as a proper and necessary part of the social structure, and that the opportunities available to artists are wholly inadequate for raising their art to the high level required in a true national culture. The Canadian artist is dispossessed. His resumption of his rightful place will not be achieved by the ascendancy of any group over the others in a contest of aesthetic ideas, but rather by the solidarity of all groups striving for a common political ideal, within which all varieties of artistic preference may find an opportunity to flourish.

These political aims must be defined in the light of the depressing conditions under which Canadian art clings so precariously to its existence. Canada, unlike the older countries of Europe, has neither an art tradition (that is, a popular acceptance of art as a part of

the good life) nor a cultured and leisured class large enough or sufficiently interested even to support, let alone encourage, its development. Advances in art education have barely touched the adult population, and any tendencies towards a more enlightened interest have not yet reached a stage where people accept the arts of painting and sculpture, or even of industrial design, as essential to material as well as spiritual progress.

Financial support extended by public authorities to art institutions is niggardly. Training centres for professional artists and designers are few and small, and are not yet either staffed or equipped with the competence to produce graduates equal to those of American or European colleges.

Artists, in turn, lack opportunity for complete occupation in the arts. Most of them are compelled to rely for a livelihood on such occupations as teaching or commercial designing, and can devote only a deplorably small remainder of time to their principal purpose in life. This enforced part-time participation in the arts implies that the majority of Canada's artists are unable to develop their powers as fully as would be possible if they were wholly engaged in creative work. Such a handicap limits the production and confines the talents of modernist and academic alike; and very few Canadian artists reach the peaks, no matter how loudly they sing "Excelsior."

Few institutions are so well placed as the R.C.A., politically, if not ideologically, to launch a crusade to fit art into the very foundations of the better Canada now being designed. National in scope, nominally at least the principal art organization in Canada, already supported in part by government grants, and having among its members a number of artists respected by all schools, it still has the power to revive its wanling leadership of art affairs in this country. To itself as the nucleus it must attract the support of all artists and art societies having as their guiding purpose the

vigorous development of art in the national life. Artists everywhere await anxiously and will welcome enthusiastically the initiation of such an effort. The failure of the R.C.A. to accept this opportunity and responsibility may well mark its final eclipse.

It should of course be understood that in making these proposals I do not speak officially for the Academy. Rather I am submitting, for the consideration of all concerned, a plan which I believe would serve the ultimate interests of the Academy, the other art societies of the country, and Canadian art in general. As a painter and teacher of art, and a member of the Academy as well as several other art groups, I feel that the progress of art in Canada demands a bolder and more concerted plan of action than any now in operation.

The success, or even the possibility of success, of the proposed experiment depends on two decisively important elements. The first is the total reorganisation of the Academy on democratic lines, for no autocratically governed body can inspire the general confidence essential to the solution of controversial issues. The second is the character of the program to be adopted, and more particularly, the machinery of co-operation devised to frame and achieve it.

The main purposes of the plan are simple to define. The list, necessarily abbreviated, includes:

- a. A greatly expanded program of art education for laymen, the consumers of art; the raising of standards of art teaching, and the improving of facilities and physical equipment.
- b. The establishing of new institutions and the enlarging of existing centres for the technological training of artists, the producers of art; and opportunities for research in technical and other matters relating to art.
- c. The wider dispersion of galleries and museums; the adequate extension of the services of the National

*Continued on page 174*

# CANADIAN GROUP OF PAINTERS—1944

BY YVONNE MCKAGUE HOUSSER, A.R.C.A.

*A Biennial Exhibition shown at the Art Association of Montreal, January 7 to 31; at the London Art Museum, February 11 to March 7; at the Art Gallery of Toronto, April 21 to May 21.*

ANNE SAVAGE. *The Canoe.* Oil.



ARTHUR LISMER  
*Anchor and Floats,*  
*Grand Manan.* Oil.



ON ENTERING an exhibition there is usually an instant reaction or general impression. My first impression of the Canadian Group of Painters exhibition was of aliveness, variety, and an insistence on design. There are very few ordinary compositions, and in the majority of the paintings the composition is not just pattern-making but has grown out of the subject itself.

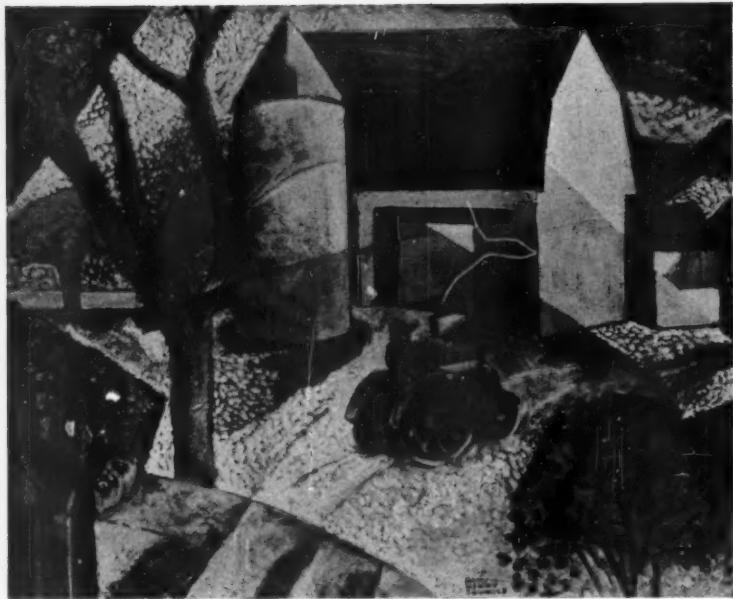
I did not feel that the artists were moved by a common purpose or ideology as in the Mexican Exhibition seen here this winter, where underneath the surface reflections of many techniques and an infinite variety of subject matter, there flowed a powerful stream of common feeling.

The Canadian Group of Painters is individualistic. I do not think it is "Canadian" in the sense that was obvious in its parent society, the Group of Seven. The members of the latter, fewer in number, bound together by a common purpose, excited by new discoveries of Canadian north country, were able to work in close fellowship with one another, and were moved by more or less the same spiritual stimulus even though

this stimulus came through the very different expressions of each member. As a result, by reason of the united power of the artists, the onlookers received a definite first impression, a spiritual lift, or if they were antagonistic to the ideology of the movement, it caused them to buzz off, mad as hornets, to write letters to the newspaper.

This close co-operation is no longer possible with such a large membership from all parts of Canada, and the old criticism that the works of members of the Group of Seven were too similar is not true of the 1944 exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters. Certainly this Group could not go on imitating the Group of Seven without losing its vitality, but one wonders if Canadian artists would be stronger if they had some unifying ideology that had its roots deeper in the life and spirit of the country.

A second impression was of the variety of colour, and as each painting was examined this impression increased. One did not wonder if three-quarters of the painters had worked from the same palette as one does with many exhibi-



RODY KENNY  
COURTICE

*October Weather*  
Oil

tions; only in very few instances was the colour monotonous. This very definite colour difference makes the show hard to hang and when the paintings are crowded, as they were in Montreal and London, many are at a decided disadvantage because of their juxtaposition with other paintings of dominating or antagonistic colours.

Some paintings that did not show to advantage in Montreal came to life in London, while others of a delicate nature lost by being jammed in between primary colours. One wonders if wide light frames might make hanging easier and help to isolate the paintings from one another.

As space does not permit discussion of all contributors to the exhibition, individual comment will be confined chiefly to those artists whose work is reproduced in the accompanying illustrations.

To the writer, Lawren Harris' two abstractions are outstanding. No painting with any real content can be appreciated in one or two visits and this is particularly true of the work of Lawren Harris. As these paintings imitate nothing, there is not the usual sensuous association to help the observer. They need contemplation to let their quality seep into the

consciousness. Looking at these paintings is akin to listening to fine music. Something new is added each time as one becomes more familiar with their form and relationships. It is research in the inner world. *War Painting* is an unusually powerful arrangement of a light grey sphere balanced against intense blues that have astonishing depth. In the foreground are chaotic and broken shapes. The reds and yellows have a particularly clear quality. *Rhythmic Organization* is very beautiful with its poised movement from dark to light and its very subtle balance. But words cannot describe these paintings; they have to be studied at first hand to be experienced.

Prudence Heward's four entries, none of them ordinary, may be taken as representative of Group attainment in the field of figure studies. The large figure reproduced is placed in an interesting way on the canvas and is very much alive. A child's head by the same artist is particularly arresting because of its sensitive modelling and appealing quality.

Henri Masson is one of the few artists who can achieve movement and at the same time solidity of form. He uses a juicy quality of paint and unites figures,

houses, and landscapes in one frolicsome mood, as in *Enfants de Choeur* and *A Country Dance*. These two paintings remind one of the colour and movement of the *Chauve Souris*.

The exhibition contains a number of paintings of war industries. One of the most striking of these is by Fritz Brandtner, who makes a forceful composition out of small figures enclosed in a cylindrical shape cut across with angles. By means of powerful balanced masses and blue sparks against glowing red, the artist has recreated the hot, noisy, fast moving atmosphere of a factory. In *The City*, Brandtner uses the symbols of a city in a closely packed pattern in more or less primary colours. The artist's intention is to suggest the noise and confusion of a large city, but to this reviewer the work does not quite attain the feeling, remaining a pattern of the symbols themselves rather than a complete expression of the subject.

Another interesting contribution to the war industry section is Caven Atkin's small but convincing study of an arc welder. This artist has a power of taking ordinary subjects and making them distinctive by his treatment of them. His *Bowl of Tulips* has rich colour and in his *Grafton Swamp Land* he extracts a striking design from what could have been an uninspiring bit of country.

Typical of Group activity in landscape painting are the contributions of Arthur Lismer, Anne Savage, and Rody Kenny Courtice. Lismer is represented in the exhibition by four canvases, none large, but each stroke in them singing with vitality. In *Dock Litter*, the orange anchor contrasts with subtly beautiful greys and blue-green water. The same artist's *Mountain Lake* is saturated with light, rich in paint quality, and has the appearance of being done with amazing freedom.

Anne Savage's love of Canadian landscape permeates her canvases. *The Canoe*

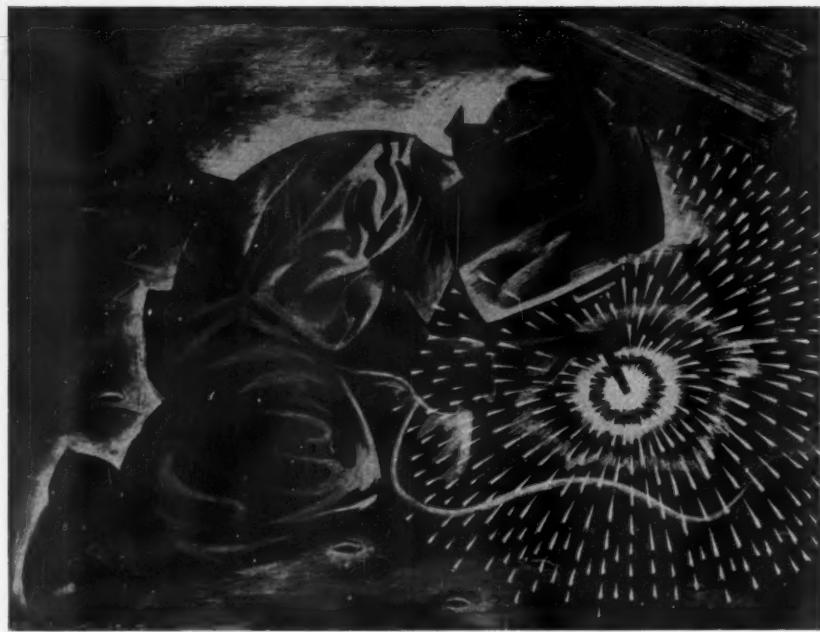
is utterly lovely in colour. *November* and *Spring Evening* possess a poignant beauty which gives one that rare sense of at-oneness with a place.

Rody Kenny Courtice paints rural Ontario in a way that conveys a feeling for both the country and the people. Her *October Weather* is a small canvas in which she uses a tractor, a barn and trees to create an original composition in varied golden browns. *Meatless Tuesday* shows a typical rural family around the table. Although some of the figures are unconvincing in themselves, they are knit together by a unique use of light and textured surfaces.

Further comment must be limited to passing mention of a few of the other pictures in the exhibition which this reviewer particularly enjoyed. The sensitive beauty of Isabel McLaughlin's work is well represented in *The Pod That Breaks*, a lovely decorative study of a milkweed pod done in silvery greys and browns. B. Cogill Haworth's *Swamp* suggests under-sea life. Its weird colour catches the eerie feeling that often surrounds a marshy place. Two mountain paintings by Bess Harris are quite new in treatment, using restrained colour and a forceful technique to express the cold immensity of the subjects.

PRUDENCE HEWARD. *Portrait*. Oil.





CAVEN ATKINS  
*Arc Welder*  
Egg Tempera

Jack Humphrey's *Night* is a beautifully designed head, mysterious and poetic. Gordon Webber's Abstracts, at their best, show a fine sense of design and achieve a definite mood. Pegi Nichol McLeod goes to town in her water colour *Army and Navy*; every line in the painting has a good time in a robust free treatment. Incidentally it might be remarked that very few paintings of war subjects in the show are successful unless the artist has had personal war experience. For the most part the artists who have dealt with both war and peace subjects are more convincing in the latter.

Taken as a whole, the exhibition holds up very well considering the difficulties of painting in wartime and the many members overseas. Such artists as Charles Comfort, Will Ogilvie, George Pepper, Edwin Holgate, Carl Schaefer and Lawren Harris, Jr., who are painting

war records in the various services, are very much missed in this exhibition, although the committee was lucky enough to get a portrait by Lawren Harris, Jr.

There are too many small pictures in the show for effective hanging, but I was cheered to hear one woman say, when she had looked at the paintings for some time, "I always judge an exhibition by the way I feel when I come out of it. If I come away stimulated and rarin' to go and paint something then I think it is a good show. But if I drag myself out wondering why anyone paints anyway, then it's bad." She evidently felt the former way in the present instance. If this is valid judgment, the Canadian Group of Painters has done a good job, with the promise of doing better when the full membership is contributing again.

FRITZ BRANDTNER  
*Welders*. Oil.



LAWREN HARRIS  
*War Painting, 1943*.  
Oil.



Fig. 1. JUAN GRIS. *Composition, "La Musique."* Tempera.



Fig. 2. MICHELANGELO. *Cumaean Sibyl.* Fresco in the Sistine Chapel, Rome.

## THE PROBLEM OF DISTORTION

Canadian Art has frequently been asked to publish material interpreting art for the layman. In answer to these requests, we offer the present article as the first of a series by the editor on art appreciation. In this series we shall discuss some of the basic problems and principles involved in the understanding and enjoyment of art.

To the beginner, nothing in the world of art is more bewildering than the liberty which many artists take in representing—or, as it may seem, misrepresenting—nature. Expecting art to be a faithful copy of visual facts, the observer finds that the artist frequently “distorts” his subject. Fig. 1 shows a modern example. A table, a stringed instrument, and other objects are forced out of their normal shapes and combined without regard to the laws of perspective.

Is such distortion due to mere stupidity or incompetence on the part of the artist, or does it contribute to certain desirable artistic effects?

Food for thought with regard to this question presents itself when we turn from controversial modern work to the accepted artistic achievements of the past. The observer who reviews his history of art soon discovers that distortion is not limited to the modern period, but has been practiced, to one degree or

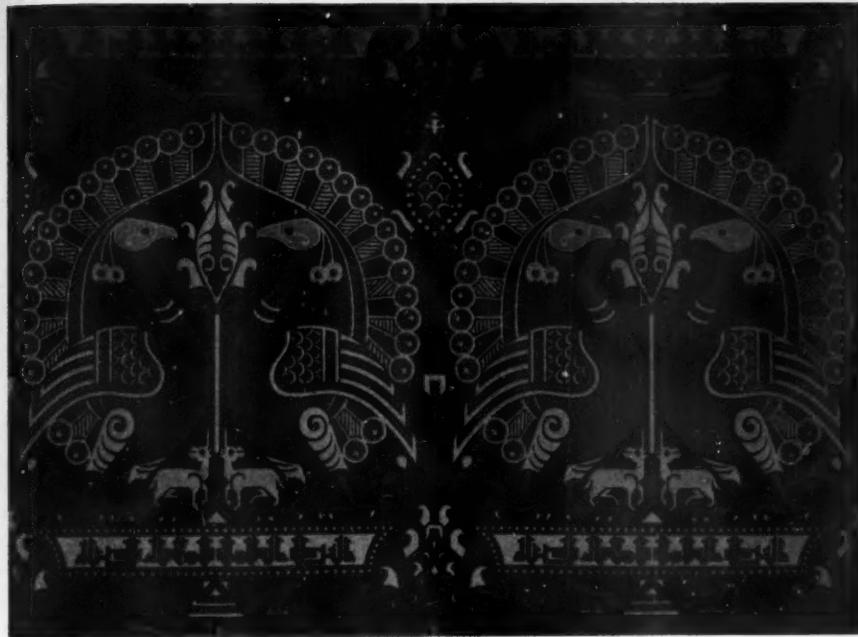


Fig. 3. TWELFTH CENTURY MOORISH TEXTILE. St. Sernin, Toulouse.

another, by nearly all schools of art. Let us consider one example from the painting of the past and one from its decorative art.

In the realm of painting few would deny that Michelangelo ranks as one of the great masters. Look at his *Cumaean Sibyl*, Fig. 2. It represents the form of a woman. Did nature ever produce such a woman? Decidedly, no! The figure seems to be made of stone, not flesh. Its size, bulk, and massiveness exceed anything ever seen in the real feminine form, or even in the real masculine form. Joe Louis, undefeated among human heavy-weights, would crumple at one push from the *Cumaean Sibyl*. Michelangelo has definitely distorted the facts of human anatomy.

In our textile design, Fig. 3, distortion is still more noticeable. The forms of birds and plants are flattened out like pressed leaves, are used in connection with mythical creatures such as the unicorn, and are combined in arbitrary groupings which would never occur in nature. The position of the peacocks'

tails, for instance, is all wrong if judged by natural models.

Distortion, then, has been common practice in the art of many periods. Either we must condemn much of the world's best known art because of it, or we must assume that in distorting nature the artist is serving a purpose which we, perhaps, do not fully understand. Modesty and wisdom lie with the second alternative.

In point of fact, art of the highest quality is never *merely* a copy of natural facts, but is rather a selection and re-organization of natural facts for an artistic purpose. The average person understands this better in literature than in visual art, because in school and college he has had more opportunity to study literature. You recall the opening lines of Shelley's "To a Skylark":

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!

Bird thou never wert.

What extraordinary distortion! The poet addresses himself to a bird—which is silly to begin with, since the bird will neither hear nor understand him—and

then exclaims, "Bird thou never wert!" A bird is told that it is not a bird! What nonsense! Is Shelley ignorant of natural history, or is he bent on annoying his readers, or is he just plain crazy? Obviously none of these. He is a poet—an artist. He is not attempting to tell us the facts about a skylark. Telling facts, as such, is the business of reporters and scientists, not poets and artists. Shelley is concerned with something at least equally important. He is trying to convey to us the *emotion* which he felt on hearing the skylark sing. A mere statement of facts could not have accomplished this purpose, but the words

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!

Bird thou never wert,

suggest at once that the skylark gives the listener something which no mere bird could be expected to give: that it lifts his mind and heart to spiritual heights. Out of a distortion of facts comes a higher insight into emotional and spiritual reality. That is art of the highest order.

On the basis of the above examples, the reader will perhaps be willing to concede that distortion has an honourable tradition in the history of art and that, in the right hands, it can be used to enrich the artist's work. To what specific ends does it contribute? They are many, but we must limit ourselves to mentioning four of them.

1. *The emotional interpretation of nature.* As in the case of the poem just cited, nature is the starting point, but what the artist expresses is not nature in and for itself, but rather the state of mind and soul into which he has been thrown by nature. The exaggerated bulk of the *Cumaean Sibyl* is due partly to this principle. What Michelangelo most admired in the human figure was the impression of power and vitality which it conveyed to him. In his paintings he magnified that impression to produce a world of titanic supermen. That many great minds have been impressed by the result may be gathered from Goethe's exclamation, "At the moment I am so

engrossed by Michelangelo that even nature does not appeal to me, for her vision is not so grandiose as his!"

The distortions in the lower illustration on page 137 of this issue serve a similar purpose of intensifying suggestions from nature, but in this case the desired effect is that of humour. As every reader of comic strips recognizes, the exaggerations and disproportions of a clever caricature afford us a certain kind of pleasure not received from normal figures.

2. *Imaginative and symbolical expression.* Much of the world's art is less concerned with reproducing material facts than with expressing man's inner preoccupations. It aims to "body forth the forms of things unseen," finding its chief inspiration in visions, dreams, fantasies, and ideals rather than in outward objects. Its purpose is thus imaginative and symbolical rather than naturalistic.

Such a purpose can rarely be fulfilled by representing natural forms entirely in a natural way. The artist may borrow from nature, but in doing so he freely recomposes his borrowings to help produce a supernatural or super-realistic (surrealistic) effect. Placing the wings of a bird on the body of a man to create an angel is a simple example from Christian art. It violates, and in that sense distorts, the laws of nature, but by doing so it attains a power of symbolically expressing certain spiritual concepts. Were art never to modify natural forms, symbolical expression would be difficult if not impossible. Art and life would both be poorer as a result.

This symbolical element in its turn is partly responsible for the distortions visible in the *Cumaean Sibyl*. Michelangelo was intent on representing, not a woman as such, but a legendary personage from the traditions of classical antiquity. A normal woman's form would not have possessed the heroic stature and brooding power which his imaginative embodiment of the theme evokes for us.

3. *Respect for the artist's medium.* In Fig. 3 this is the main reason for distortion

*Continued on page 171*



CAPT. C. F. COMFORT. Canadian Guns firing on German Positions near Campobasso, Italy, October, 1943. Hill town of Ferrazzano in background. Water colour.

## AN ARTIST ON THE ITALIAN FRONT

BY CAPT. C. F. COMFORT

**I**N WRITING this short article, which must of necessity be limited in its comment, I have asked myself, what might the artists in Canada want to know about their colleagues working with the armed forces overseas and how much of what they want to know can be told at this time? You must already know who the appointees are, the circumstances of their appointment, and no doubt by this time you will have seen some of the work they have done. It remains then, among many things, to relate some of the circumstances under which the work is done and possibly to say something of the materials and methods employed in doing it. Most of these comments will necessarily have to

be personal. All will be confined to the Canadian Army. The other services will produce their own experiences, and no doubt the appointees within those services will have another story to tell.

I am writing from Italy. This country has always had romantic connotations for the artist. So much of what we know as Christian art saw its development here. Such great personalities as Giotto, Piero della Francesca and Leonardo lived and worked and were inspired by the new ideals of humanism and the dynamic impulse of the Renaissance in this country. Here great architects like Brunelleschi, Bramante and Maderna built churches, palaces, streets and public squares in styles we borrow freely from

today in spite of our alleged modernity.

The scenery of the country is also beautiful. Many of you will have been here in the days before the war. You will remember the fabulous western coast line, the grandeur of Lago Maggiore, the architectural beauties of Pisa and Siena. Then there is the wild classical beauty of the Appennines, the picturesque simplicity of the peasant life, the delight of bathing in the tepid waters of the Adriatic. All these, combined with a Mediterranean climate, have for the peacetime traveller or student made Italy one of the most attractive countries in Europe.

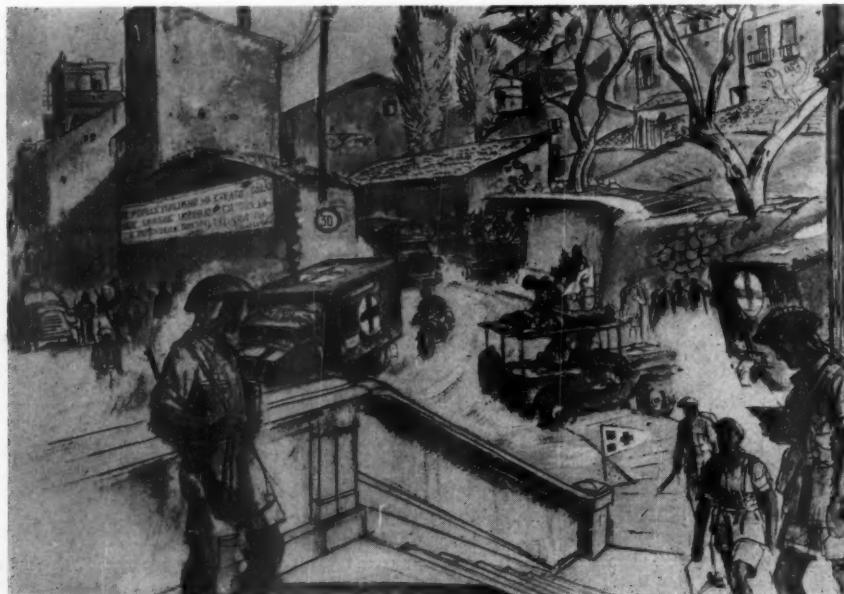
In this wartime experience the setting remains the same, but the properties, costumes and the play have changed. This is a winter campaign. The great massifs of the Appennines are deep in snow. There was half an inch of ice in my water bucket this morning. We are living under carefully camouflaged canvas in an orange grove. Until we advanced to this point, the incredibly green trees glowed with ripe fruit. Now there are simply the incredibly green trees. Under the trees further south grew forage legumes; now there exists a sea of mud, knee-deep and of extraordinary plasticity. In this setting we

live. From it we move out to our painting locations.

At the present time there are two war artists with the Canadians here, Capt. Lawren P. Harris and myself. We are attached for all purposes to the Historical Section, a section which collects, collates and finally renders into narrative form, the story of the campaign. In this area the section is under the direction of Capt. Sam Hughes, son of the late Major General Garnet Hughes.

The first significant work by a Canadian war artist in an active theatre of war was done by Capt. W. A. Ogilvie of Montreal. Ogilvie waded ashore from the landing barges on Pachino Beach in the invasion of Sicily and has made a stirring visual record of the Canadian action throughout the Sicilian campaign, the invasion of Italy, and the march up through the peninsula. He has produced a tremendous volume of sketches and notes, many made from vehicles on the move, nearly all made under fire.

As far as Canadian artists and the Canadian Army is concerned, Ogilvie has been the pioneer in active operations. No one knew exactly what conditions would be like. We knew they would be difficult and dangerous. We knew that unpredictable problems would arise.



CAPT. W.  
OGILVIE

Field Dressing Station of the  
First Canadian Crash  
Division Medical Corp  
Valguarnera Camp  
Sicily, September, 1943  
Water color

CAPT.  
CON

STAN

OLL

CRASH

ARILLE

REGIM

CAMP

ITALY,

1943

WATER

COLO

WATER

Ogilvie met and solved them all and has returned us a brilliant series of drawings and paintings that will make history for Canadian art as well as for the Canadian Army.

I was sent to the Mediterranean shortly after the invasion of Italy, joined Ogilvie and worked with him here for two months before he was relieved. One of the interesting things we did together was to put on an exhibition of the work of the section in an Italian provincial town where the Canadian troops were "at rest". Lt. Col. Trumbull Warren was the enthusiastic protagonist of the exhibition and it was he who obtained for us a room in the "Beaver Club", a former Fascist gymnasium and sports centre. We hung about sixty items, posted a Provost guard and opened the show for two days.

The result was phenomenal. Troops crowded the exhibition, which could only be opened during our very short light-day. This I believe to be the first two-man all Canadian exhibition ever held in Italy or ever held in a forward battle area. In the two days the Provost counted 3,100 soldier visitors. There were probably many more. The interest displayed was most encouraging. Knots of men gathered about the works discuss-

sing their merit, or relating some personal experience they had had in the same action, or in that town, or crossing that river. Requests came in for copies or reproductions, so that altogether we felt that we were filling some purposeful need over and above the objectives of the war art program.

The greatest tribute of all came when General Montgomery, through his Liaison Officer, requested that we appear at Army H.Q. with the exhibition and show it to him personally. So we packed the pictures in a truck and crossed the country to Army H.Q. The General received us very cordially, wearing his two-badged black beret and a short sheepskin-lined leather jacket. He put on tortoise-shell glasses and spent more time than I thought he had to spare going carefully over each item. We had tea with him and his staff and returned, highly elated, to our own camp.

The routine of an army war artist depends on many factors: enemy action, movement, weather, transport and whether he is working from Division, Brigade, or Unit H.Q. Taking an average good day, he is up at first light. If he is with Brigade or lower formations he has slept in a "bivvy" on the ground. After hasty ablutions and a mess-tin

*Continued on page 175*

W.  
GILVIE  
CAPT. C. F.  
COMFORT

Dress  
n of  
Canada  
Crash Action;  
on Me  
Artillery Field  
Cot  
Regiment near  
uarne  
Campobasso,  
Sept  
Italy, October,  
1943.  
1943.  
Water colour.



# YOUNG CANADA

J. GREGORY TODD



*When asked to provide a title for the above drawing, Todd replied, "I have never titled my work. In this drawing I intended to show two sides of low life: the seated figure, a person down and out from the effects of continued drinking, a person with nothing but a shrivelling soul, thrown out of the barroom by the evil personage of the barkeeper. Perhaps the title might be "Two Evils."*

DURING recent times Canadian artists have found their inspiration chiefly in landscape, still life, and portraiture. The human figure, if represented at all, has usually been treated as a motif for design rather than a medium for psychological interpretation. Against such a background it comes almost as a shock—a stimulating and thought-provoking shock—to discover Canadian pictures which are concerned with man in his elusive depths of spirit, emotion, and social conditioning. Such, as can be seen from the accompanying reproductions, are the pictures of the young artist, J. Gregory Todd.

Both the works shown are "illustrations" in the sense that they tell a story, but they are not merely illustrations. The example at the left, a crayon drawing accented with ink, shows definite graphic power. Its lights and darks are vigorously handled, its line is incisive, its design unified. Significant composition is present in both examples, but instead of being used to gratify the eye as an end in itself, it becomes a means of transmitting the artist's feeling for certain spiritual and social values. In so doing it enters the field where art is an expression, not merely or even primarily of the sense of beauty, but rather of the human soul in all its obscure complexity. If such work is in any degree typical of the oncoming generation, Canadian art seems destined to expand those psychological and human aspects of experience which, up to the present, have not greatly concerned it.

Gregory Todd, who is still a youth in his twenties, comes from Fredericton, New Brunswick. He began his art studies

*Brief studies of the art and ideas of the coming generation.*

## EGY TODD

in that city with a private teacher, Mrs. John Kinghorn, spent three years at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Montreal, and then took a course at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N.Y., from which he secured a diploma as illustrator last May. Without waiting for the graduation exercises, Todd returned to Canada and shortly afterward enlisted in the army. He is now serving as a private and is stationed at Camp Sussex, N.B. "I have had little opportunity to work on bigger things since leaving Pratt," he writes, "but though I am not painting now I find my thoughts increasing and I hope soon to have opportunity to get at it once again."

The examples of Todd's work which we have seen are small in scale—the originals are only half again as large as our reproductions—but this very smallness adds to their stature. They are condensed in the extreme; full of substance to a degree which is rare in larger work by young artists. If they are sombre in their themes, and consequently sombre in design and colour, it must be remembered that we live today in a sombre world. It is well that at least some of our artists should sound the darkness of our time and symbolize the destruction, suffering, and degradation from which humanity patiently awaits release.

That Todd has definite views on such matters is evident from this sentence from one of his recent letters, "I have rather strong opinions about the present art world and often wonder why so many artists are painting pretty pictures and disregarding so many important things which are going on at the present time."

W.A.



*"This illustration," the artist explains, "shows the tragic results brought on labourers by the corruption of those in charge, who use graft and cheap materials that they may gain. The labourers are bricklayers and cement mixers, dead or suffering in the ruins of a collapsed building of poor material. I made the painting after reading a short story on a similar subject." The colour of the picture is a sombre harmony of dark green and brown through which emerge subdued lights of red and yellow.*

**CANADIAN WAR ART  
AT THE NATIONAL  
GALLERY, LONDON**

*Left to right:* P/C  
Carl Schaefer, S.  
Kenneth Clark, Di-  
rector of the National  
Gallery; H.R.H. the  
Duchess of Kent; S.  
Rt. Hon. Vincent  
Massey. The group  
examining Schaefer's  
painting, *Night Ex-  
ercise*.



**JUDGING THE R.C.A.  
EXHIBITION AT THE  
NATIONAL GALLERY  
OF CANADA.**

*Left to right:* P/C  
Charles Goldhamer,  
Group Capt. K. J.  
Conn, A. Y. Jackson,  
S/L R. W. Horne  
(standing), F/O  
Holgate, H. O.  
Curry, Director of  
the National Gallery  
of Canada.



# COAST TO COAST IN ART

CANADIAN ART invites its readers to send reports of current art activities from all parts of the Dominion. Please address communications to the News Editor, CANADIAN ART, Box 384, Ottawa.

## ONTARIO

### OTTAWA

#### THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

From this distance it is not easy to judge of the Canadian section of the exhibition of the war art of the Dominions which was opened at the National Gallery in London in January. Vincent Massey brought back favourable reports and Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery, is said to have thought well of some of the work. From other sources however, it appears that the artists themselves were far from satisfied, especially those who have only recently reached England and the various fronts, and who felt that it was far too soon to give any idea of what they can do. There is no doubt that this is a justifiable criticism and it was a moot point as to whether Canada should be represented at this time or not. As it is, it must be realized, as was pointed out previously, that the exhibition can only be considered as foretaste of what we hope is to come. As such it has probably not been too bad a show but it has not been one over which to raise any hue and cry, and so far no comments have been received from the British press. For those who are interested an illustrated account is to be found in *Saturday Night* of March 25.

Here in Ottawa the Army Art Exhibition has held the front line and as it has been fully reviewed on page 135 there is no need to say more about it in these notes. *The Montreal Standard* has also devoted part of a recent number to the artists attached to the R.C.A.F. and it

seems that at long last our war art is coming into a little of its own.

The R.C.A.F. show is next on the list and is to open at the Gallery towards the end of April. It has already been judged and selected, with Jackson, Holgate, Goldhamer and H. O. McCurry among those on the jury.

How refreshing, in the real sense of the word, was the exhibition of drawings by Augustus John seen lately at the National Gallery. After all the confusing thought and clutter of present day theories about art, his work is simply and generously alive. One of the most brilliant draughtsmen of his day, every line he draws is fluid and easy, expressing the certainty of his sensitive, creative vision and the virility and gusto of his personality.

The Contemporary British Water Colours, shown concurrently, are for the most part in a sense the very antithesis of the John drawings. Here is little of the same vigorous contact with life but rather an intimate personal quality and a delicate restrained use of colour. This is to be seen in the work of David Jones and Clough Taylor, and in the abstractions of John Tunnard, with their original treatment of surfaces. In comparison with these, Piper and Sutherland are more intensely individual, the former in the strange haunting atmosphere he gives to his architectural subjects, and the latter in his power to make of the things of this earth something vivid and new of his own. Both these exhibitions were from the American British Art Center in New York.

AT THE NATIONAL  
GALLERY

AUGUSTUS JOHN. *David John.*  
Pencil drawing. Below: JOHN  
PIPER. *Michelney Abbey.* Water  
colour.





NICOLAS POUSSIN (1594-1665). *Romantic Landscape*. Recently presented to the National Gallery of Canada by H. S. Southam, Esq., C.M.G.

H. S. Southam, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, has made a further generous gift to the Gallery with the recent presentation of his important "Romantic Landscape" by Poussin, illustrated here. This, a dark dramatic canvas in Poussin's characteristic classical manner, is a great addition to the French collection and, as far as is known, the only example of the artists' work in Canada.

Lectures have been given by Frits Lugt, the well known Dutch art historian, formerly of the Hague and Amsterdam, on "Rembrandt and his Drawings", and by Dr. Pieter Brieger of the University of Toronto on "Renaissance Architecture" and "Dutch Painting". The Sunday afternoon concerts continue to draw large crowds and have included programs by the Hart

House Quartet, the Ottawa String Quartet and others.

Jack Nichols, the most recent recruit to the war artists, is now a sub-lieutenant in the R.C.N. and is on his way to an assignment in Halifax.

#### ELSEWHERE IN OTTAWA

The Department of Agriculture has issued a review statement outlining the work and recommendations of the Provisional Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Hand Arts and Crafts. This statement was prepared by Deane H. Russell of Ottawa, secretary of the committee. Among its recommendations is the encouragement of the wider practice and appreciation of useful Canadian arts and crafts for both rural and urban populations, as being "of considerable

national economic, cultural and social importance." Further it recommends that such encouragement might appropriately be undertaken as an extension of the existing services offered by the National Gallery in close co-operation with the Department of Agriculture.

At a meeting of the committee held recently, at which H. O. McCurry was made Chairman, it was agreed that these recommendations should be brought before Parliament and that the Government should be asked to make, as soon as possible, a complete national survey of hand crafts in Canada with a view to extending direct government support.

A copy of the Interdepartmental Committee report will be sent to leaders of organized craft activities on request to the Secretary, Committee on Canadian Hand Arts and Crafts, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

After an interval of two years or more, Henri Masson has recently held another exhibition of his oils, water colours and drawings. His work continues to gain in ease and assurance and in that freshness and spontaneity which is so characteristic of it. Swiftly and with great economy of means he makes his witty comments on the everyday life of the people around him, suggests the wetness of streets after rain, the rush of skaters on a rink at night and the atmosphere of the countryside. Probably less well known because less frequently exhibited are his pencil drawings and his portraits, the former pleasing for the simplicity and vivacity of their line; the latter direct, vigorous and strong in colour. An illustrated article on Masson's work will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Canadian Art*.

The painting class of the University Women's Club of Ottawa which has met during the winter under the direction of Miss Naomi Jackson, will hold an exhibition at the end of May.—K.M.F.

## TORONTO

### THE ART GALLERY OF TORONTO

It is with mingled feelings of relief and regret that the staff sees the close of the Loan Exhibition of Great Paintings in Aid of Allied Merchant Seamen. Over 57,000 people attended and without doubt it was a tremendous success. During the first month fifteen groups, mostly of school children, visited it daily, and for the last week there were four tours a day for the general public. The amount of work and organization involved was immense, but it was justified by the exhibition itself, the greatest collection ever seen in Toronto.

Visitors were asked to vote for five of the pictures which had the most personal appeal for them. The results were as follows: first, Hogarth's *The Graham Children*; second, Tom Thomson's *Northern River*; third, Rembrandt's *The Philosopher*; fourth, Vermeer's *The Milkmaid*; fifth, Tom Thomson's *West Wind*. Undoubtedly it was the charming presentation of the subject matter in the Hogarth, the deep humanity and mystic quality in the Rembrandt, and the jewel-like luminosity of the Vermeer which dictated this choice. But the most interesting result of the poll was the position of the two Thomson's and it is pleasing to know that these Canadian paintings showed up as two of the outstanding canvases in the exhibition.

The 1944 exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists is refreshing with an immediate impression of colour, warmth and sincerity. Despite the absence of many of the best artists, who are painting war records, the O.S.A. is more alive, has more originality, than it has had for years and gives promise of breathing new life into Canadian art.

The main theme this year, "Artist Paints Artist", has resulted in a number of portraits characterized by an air of good humour rather than depth. They range in type from Kenneth Forbe's academic portrayal of F. H. Brigden to Rody Kenny Courtice's caricature of

Yvonne McKague Housser. Those by R. York Wilson, Kathleen Daly and Yvonne McKague Housser are particularly interesting in technique and approach, but the most outstanding portrait is Lilius Newton's of Frances Loring—simple, dignified and even monumental in its handling.

Artists of established reputation such as Jackson, Casson, Panton, Haworth, Brigden and Haines have contributed canvases with their usual charm and very much in their usual manner. These are familiar to us. It is the signs of originality in the exhibition that bear discussing. In the work of the younger artists there is a growing interest in people rather than in landscape. People are seen in relation to their environment. There is for instance R. York Wilson's *The Line Up*, a subject observed outside a brewery, and Helen FitzGerald's painting of jitterbugs, both with much humour and character in the figures. Stanley Cooper's *Big Annual Street Dance* shows a gay,

whirling throng of young people dancing at night with the brilliant lights in the background investing the predominating darkness of the picture with drama and excitement.

In Donald Neddeau's *Native Son* and Wilfred Beny's *The Soil* the figures have the same earthy, fundamental quality as the deep soil on which they work. Other paintings reveal an interest in social and economic problems. Among such are Hawley Yarwood's depiction of life in the slums, satirically entitled *Gypsy's Playground*, and Alan Collier's two symbolic canvases *Youth 1933* and *Youth 1943*.

The show is a large one and of necessity unfortunately crowded in its hanging, but despite this disadvantage, the hopeful signs in it are apparent: many promising young artists, new techniques, a wider range of subject matter and more experiment in colour. There are of course still weaknesses, an unfortunate kind of commercial slickness about a



LILIAS TORRANCE  
NEWTON

*Frances Loring.* Oil.  
In the O.S.A.  
"Artist Paints  
Artist" exhibition.

good deal of the show, and a self conscious technical cleverness. It is too terribly "pleasant," with the characteristic of many Canadian exhibitions of being afraid to deal with any subject that in any way might offend somebody's sensibilities. Many of the paintings have no more meaning or depth than a magazine cover. These are the drawbacks but on the whole the 1944 exhibition bodes well for the future.

Space does not permit more than mention of the exhibition of the Sculptors' Society of Canada. To be noted among the many excellent pieces are the small groups of Jacobine Jones, the delightful animal subjects of Eugenia Berlin, Dora Wechsler's extremely expressive figures, Florence Wyle's busts of A. Y. Jackson and Archibald Barnes, and the strong and interesting work of Elizabeth Wyn Wood and Emanuel Hahn.

MARGARET TUCKER.

*An illustrated article on the exhibition of the Sculptors' Society of Canada will appear in our June-July issue.—EDITOR.*

#### ELSEWHERE IN TORONTO

The mural by A. A. Macdonald, reproduced herewith, was painted at the request of J. S. Vanderploeg, general manager of the Canadian plant of Anaconda American Brass Limited in To-

ronto. The mural decorates Mr. Vanderploeg's office. Carried out in blue and copper tones, this 4 x 10½ foot painting shows the story of the brass and copper industry from the mining of the metal to the shipping of the finished products. The artist is a member of the Decorating Department of the Robert Simpson Co. Ltd., Toronto. The co-operation of art and industry in carrying out this project is an encouraging indication of new fields of activity for the Canadian artist.

The Federation of Canadian Artists, through its national office in Toronto, has now issued its "Plan for the Extension of the National Gallery of Canada." This was prepared by a committee of the British Columbia Regional Division of the Federation under the leadership of Lawren Harris.

The plan says in part: "In submitting this report, we do so in the belief that the trend of present-day democracy points to a form of social order in which art will enter more fully into the common life. We believe that the National Gallery has a large part to play in creating this condition. We are aware of what the National Gallery has done in the past, under severe physical and financial handicaps, but we see a greater future for it in which it may take its place as



A. A. MACDONALD. *Copper Industry*. Mural painted for Anaconda American Brass Ltd., Toronto.

the central institution of art in Canada, distributing its knowledge, its treasures and its sympathies throughout the Dominion, thus fulfilling its function as a truly national institution. In order that this may be, it is apparent to us that the people themselves, through their elected M.P.'s must seek this public service not on the basis of aesthetic appeal alone, but on the more common ground of art as an integrating element in all phases of our social activity. We see art as an instrument capable of forging the links between the many peoples in our Dominion."

Among the specific proposals are: 1) that the National Gallery "establish a series of branches in every medium-sized city from coast to coast where no gallery or exhibition rooms already exist"; 2) that exhibitions of all kinds, supplemented by certain works from the permanent national collection, be shown in these branches; 3) that "field workers be placed in charge of these exhibitions in order to care for the pictures, give lectures, lead discussions, make surveys, and gather information concerning the needs and wants of the branches."

No action has yet been taken in connection with these proposals. Those who desire to study the complete plan can secure copies of the report from H. Garnard Kettle, Executive Secretary of the Federation, 62 Rosehill Avenue, Toronto.

The Easter meeting of the Ontario Association of Teachers of Art was held on April 11th and 12th at the Art Gallery of Toronto.

#### WINDSOR

The 1943-44 Travelling Exhibition of the Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers

and Engravers, sponsored by the Windsor Art Association, opened at the Willistead Library Art Gallery early in March. Nicholas Hornyansky, president of the above Society, was guest speaker later in the month.

The recent "Twenty-five Years of the U.S.S.R." exhibition, brought by the Association under its policy of interesting various racial and cultural groups in the Gallery, was most successful. Mr. E. P. Richardson, Assistant Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts spoke at the members' preview, and a Russian evening was organized with the help of the Federation of Russian Canadians. On the occasion of the preview a presentation was made by the doctors of Windsor to the Association, for the Gallery, of a painting, "Early Snow, Sunnybrook" by Manly MacDonald.

Among the lecturers in the series "Jewish and Christian Contributions to Art Forms" have been Rabbi Leon Fram, Rev. Father Henry Thiefels, Dean Kirk B. O'Ferrall and Clair W. Ditchy, A.I.A.

A Saturday Morning Children's Art Program has now been organized by the Curator and school classes continue to make full use of the Gallery during the week.

Recently Miss Clair Heller, Canadian sculptor, formerly of Toronto and now living in Windsor, gave a lecture and demonstration of her work under the auspices of the Windsor Handicraft Guild. The demonstration took the form of sculpturing a portrait bust from a living model. Previous to this Miss Heller had worked daily in the Carnegie Library from the model where the public had the opportunity of seeing her methods and discussing them with her.

DAPHNE HEIN.

## QUEBEC

#### MONTREAL

#### THE ART ASSOCIATION OF MONTREAL

The Loan Exhibition of Five Centuries of Dutch Painting is nearly over. At

the moment of reporting, two weeks after it opened its doors, more than 50,000 people have visited it. Young and grown-up, mostly young, have been

pouring in from schools, associations, factories, offices and from the surrounding country. The English speaking children have come in the morning from 9.30 to 11 a.m. and the French speaking children from 11 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., a sort of per population allotment which has not been borne out by the facts, as the English children rolled up a 12,000 attendance for their quota, and the French about 26,000 for theirs. In this city of racial impacts, where art is a common denominator, the races are still kept apart when visiting places.

The exhibition as a whole is a thrilling one, especially the primitives or early Dutch paintings, and the thirty van Goghs. The Hague School, Israels, the Maris brothers, Weissenbruch and others of the late 19th century show, in comparison with the 17th century of high achievement, just how low a nation's art can go. The modern Dutch group includes a canvas by Piet Mondriaan, who died recently in New York, a strange abstract painting, as austere as a plan for a traffic intersection, but full of extraordinary implications of change and new direction in art.

Professor Jan Vorenkamp of Smith College, Professor Frits Lugt of Oberlin College and Joep Nicolas, painter and designer, all Dutchmen of distinction, Dr. Peter Brieger of the University of Toronto, Baron van der Elst and several others gave the lectures and gallery talks. In all, the exhibition has been as great and enlivening as a musical festival.

The active season drawing to a close has been a busy one. The Art Association's Museum of Fine Arts is definitely on the program of thousands of Montrealers. The Spring Exhibition, "hardy perennial," opens in April. The Children's Annual Exhibition, the Montreal Camera Club Photographic Salon, and the exhibition of the School of Art and Design, will close the exhibition season in May.

The School of Art and Design has had what might be termed an experimental year of new organization and

activity and is not yet fully organized. The change over to a more modern form where students and art workers may receive practical instruction in design and commercial art as well as in painting, drawing and sculpture, is not to be accomplished in one year. More than 400 students have attended the classes and lectures this year and in addition teachers, children and members have brought up the number of regular enrollees to more than 700, young and old.

A Summer School is planned for July. Outdoor sketching, drawing and painting from life, mural painting, design and teacher-training are to be the general subjects.

ARTHUR LISMER.

#### ELSEWHERE IN MONTREAL

The Quebec Region of the Federation of Canadian Artists held a general meeting in the Museum of Fine Arts in February. It took the form of a panel discussion on serigraphic (silk screen) prints and their technique, and appropriately took place in the gallery where the travelling exhibition of American Silk Screen Prints from the Museum of Modern Art, National Film Board silk screen posters, and some of the National Gallery's silk screen reproductions, were hung. The discussion led by Charles Fainmel, Henry Eveleigh and Fred Anders, was stimulating and productive and evoked keen interest. Plans were made for the formation of a Serigraphic Workshop Group with the opening of a small workshop, and promises of financial and other material assistance were received from the artist representatives of large business firms who were present. Subsequently several meetings of the workshop sub-committee have been held and technical demonstrations arranged. Considerable research and experiment will be necessary before prints will be produced comparable to those of the experienced American artists, but the group is confident of successful competition with them in the near future.

It is believed that this group will be the first in Canada to utilize the silk

screen medium as a fine art. The medium is possessed of infinite potentialities and perhaps presents greater possibilities than any other print-making process to ingenious and resourceful artists. The National Gallery is to be congratulated on its part in the circulation of the American Exhibition and the study of these prints is recommended to all artists in Canada.

Mrs. Dorothy Macpherson, honorary secretary of the Quebec Region since its inception has joined the staff of the Graphics Section of the National Film Board. A very hard worker, tolerant and good humoured, with great faith in the F.C.A. and wide experience in its work and that of similar organizations in Great Britain, it will be difficult to fill her place, and it is with much regret that the Region sees her go.

At the general meeting in April, Stanley Cosgrove is to give an account of his four years in Mexico during which he worked for some time under Orozco. The Region is also to convene sub-committees on handicrafts and sculpture, study the B.C. Region's plan for the extension of the National Gallery, launch a spring membership campaign and raffle a sketch generously donated by Arthur Lismer to augment the treasury.

FREDERICK B. TAYLOR.

## QUEBEC

The two events most worthy of comment in Quebec recently were the exhibitions of the Anciens des Beaux-Arts de Montreal and the Audubon show. Both were held at the Provincial Museum.

In the Beaux-Arts show, which was mostly composed of small pictures, the choice was good. Moderation was in evidence in both the *metier* and the subject matter. There was none of the academic touch or of that worse calamity, the modern *tape l'oeil* and the whole exhibition was characterized by a pleasing unity.

The Audubon Prints from the Coverdale Collection of Canadiana made a most attractive ensemble of decorative drawings and graceful birds. How lovingly every detail is drawn and how precisely the posture and mannerism of every fowl is indicated! It is a pleasure to note the delicate treatment of the feathers in all their smoothness and brilliancy and to observe how majestically the water birds glide in the luminous transparency of greenish water. Audubon was indeed a talented artist as well as a gifted scientist,—a rare combination. It may be of interest to collectors of Audubon prints to know that the Université Laval has in its possession the three valuable volumes of "The Birds of America," in which are all the four-hundred and thirty-five prints.

In May, at the Provincial Museum, will be held an exhibition of the works of Edwin Holgate, Marc-Aurèle Fortin, Adrien Hébert, and Henri Hébert as sculptor. In June, also at the Provincial Museum, the annual show of students' works from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts will take place. After a lethargic winter, this spring awakening will be a blessing to many a Quebec art lover.

JEAN-PAUL LEMIEUX.

## MARITIME PROVINCES

### SAINT JOHN

The Maritime Art Association has had a busy season, having sponsored, through its member groups, a total of twenty-eight exhibitions. It is now arranging for two more collections to be circulated, one comprising the entire group of silk

screen prints published by the National Gallery, and the other a very fine collection of prints lent by the Associated American Artists of New York.

The project reported earlier this year, that of making a collection of kodal-chrome slides of work by Maritime

artists, has unfortunately had some setbacks. The building housing the firm that undertook to do the work was partially destroyed by fire and it was feared that the entire collection was lost. By great good fortune the majority of the works were uninjured and as soon as film and camera equipment can be prepared, the slides will be completed.

The Maritime Art Bulletin is being well received and some thought-provoking articles have been contributed by members. It is hoped that the bulletin will continue and will feature further articles discussing controversial aspects of art.—VIOLET GILLETT.

As usual the Saint John Art Club is sponsoring several exhibitions this year. The Canadian Group show and the Graphic Art exhibition were seen earlier in the season; the work of the Maritime Artists is now on view, and to come are the exhibitions of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, the Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and the National Gallery's silk screen reproductions. Later the Museum of Modern Art's American Silk Screen Prints, also from the National Gallery, are to be shown.

This year the program committee has arranged some of its programs in connection with the above exhibitions. Experiments have been made to encourage people to give their reasons for selecting certain pictures they would like to own and it is perhaps interesting to note how seldom subject matter has been included.

In February Miss Edith Hudson, Curator of the Art Department of the New Brunswick Museum, lectured to the Club on "Art and Counterfeit" and two reflectoscopes were used in comparing genuine and spurious works of art in various media. At the March meeting Mr. A. W. Trueman, Superintendent of the Saint John City Schools, gave an address on "Art in the Community" in wartime and after, and emphasized the lack of supervised art in our city schools.

Study groups which were organized by the Club in 1937 have been revived. Industrial design is the subject for this year and the findings of the group studying this will be given at the May Meeting. The Club has also a committee working on the possibilities of having a gallery here, much needed now and in post war years.—JULIA CRAWFORD.

## MONCTON

The Moncton Society of Art has been successfully carrying on its usual activities during the winter. Miss Anna Brewster is President this year and is proving herself a worthy successor to the line of able officers who preceded her.

The Sketch Club meets each week in the rooms of the organization in the Y.M.C.A. building. Drawing is done from the living model and the Club makes frequent excursions for field sketching. Pictures by members of the Society are on display in the Public Library. The custom is to hang one picture for about two weeks, so that the work of the individual artist is presented with the greatest advantage both to him and to the public. Among those who have exhibited their pictures in this way are Wilfred Calvert, Inga Lawson, Anna Brewster, Annie Kennedy, Daniel C. Lockhart, A. S. Robinson, David Harnett and others.

Mrs. Hartt of the Mount Allison University staff is conducting some well attended classes and the children particularly are doing some interesting work.

L.A.C. Rodbur has returned to England. His excellent work in puppetry will not soon be forgotten by those who attended his entertainments while he was stationed here, and his departure has been a great loss, for he made many friends by his modest attitude and kindly spirit of co-operation.

The exhibition of the Maritime Painters was shown early in February in the store of the T. Eaton Company and

through this courtesy of the management, thousands of visitors had an opportunity of viewing these paintings under favourable conditions.

A. S. ROBINSON.

## HALIFAX

The Nova Scotia Society of Artists' recent activities have included the showing of the Travelling Exhibition of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour in the Science Building, Dalhousie University, and a lecture on dynamic symmetry by Harold A. Russell, the latter dealing with the history of art from early times to the modern period.

The Society's 18th Annual Exhibition is to be held at the Lord Nelson Hotel from April 17th to the 22nd and is to be judged by the President Mrs. Howard Semple, Stanley Royle, R.C.A., R.B.A., and H. A. Russell, M.R.A.I.C.

The Granville Gallery was opened last November by Marguerite and LeRoy Zwicker, two well known Maritime artists and both members of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists. The policy of the gallery is to bring every aspect of contemporary art to the Halifax public, from the most conservative to the extremely modern, and each week a new exhibition is hung showing every variety of medium and technique. This is the first time an effort of this kind has been made here and the success of the enterprise is to be seen in the crowds that visit the gallery.

Exhibitions hung so far have been Paintings by Maritime Artists, among those exhibiting being Earl Bailey, Jack Humphrey, Phil Backman, W. de Garth, Lou Zwerling, Harold Beament, Stanley Royle, Christine McKeil, and Violet Gillett and Ruth Wainwright who later also showed a collection of her water colours of Peggy's Cove.

Lithographs of ships and wartime industries by Harold Beament and Charles Goldhamer were shown next, followed by the bold fresh water colours of Charles Payzant, who is now with the Walt Disney Studios in California.

Work by S. Goodman and Ruth Dingle, and portraits by Betty Cornell were varied and interesting and the exhibition of paintings by Leonard Brooks was quite outstanding.

To come are water colours by Jack Humphrey and an exhibition by three members of the Nova Scotia Society of Fine Arts, Ted Hodgkinson and Alexander Bowan, both of the R.C.N.V.R., and Ruth Wainwright.

By special request the gallery now remains open on Saturday afternoons.

The Nova Scotia Society of Artists extends its congratulations to the Zwickers and wishes them continued success.—DOROTHY HENDERSON.

The Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Arts has had three more lectures in connection with its course on art and related subjects. The first by Dr. Burns Martin, Professor of English in King's College, on "The Influence of Art on the Life of a People" showed the effect of the work of Salvator Rosa, Poussin and Claude on English life, art and literature. The second by Mr. Harold Weir, illustrated by some of his own films, had for its subject "Is Photography Art?" and created some lively discussion.

Dr. D. C. Harvey, Provincial Archivist, gave the third lecture on "The Genesis of Art in Nova Scotia". From the newspapers of 1830 to 1843, extracts were given of critiques by Joseph Howe on art exhibitions held in Halifax during that period. Advertisements for such exhibitions, and for artists' supplies at local stores and other items were cited to prove that Halifax was art-conscious at that time. Artists engaged in painting local scenes and the portraits of local celebrities were also dealt with, as well as art teachers who were conducting art classes. The interesting historical background and no little humour added greatly to the enjoyment of the lecture.

## WOLFVILLE

The Atlantic Woodcarvers Guild, Wolfville, reports that the most im-

portant event of an active winter season has been their appointment of Miss Elizabeth King, of Annapolis Royal, N.S., Art Director at Kentville Junior High School, to undertake the immediate formation of Junior Woodcarving Guilds in the public schools. These groups will elect their own officers and provide their own equipment and materials, but will work under the guidance of the central Guild. Their work will be further facilitated by the publication, in the near future, of a

series of small manuals on woodcarving, each covering a separate branch of the work, and available at ten cents a copy to anyone interested. Number 5 in this series, "Macdonald College Handicrafts Pamphlets" will be "Small Wood Sculpture" by John L. Bradford, President of the Guild.

An exhibition of about 250 pieces of Mr. Bradford's small wood sculpture, was held at the Granville Gallery, Halifax, in April.

## PRAIRIE PROVINCES

### WINNIPEG

#### WINNIPEG ART GALLERY ASSOCIATION

"The Last Frontier", the exhibition from the W. H. Coverdale Collection of Historical Canadiana, attracted a considerable number of visitors during the weeks it was on view. These early pictures in oils, water colours, prints and contemporary maps, illustrating the settlement of Western Canada, proved of great interest here, especially those works showing Fort Garry, now called Winnipeg, and some of the life and customs of pioneer days.

Another collection which was popular, especially with parents and teachers, was the National Gallery Travelling Exhibition of Canadian Children's Drawings. Special provision was made to assure that it was visited by the schools and that full advantage was taken of this was seen in the constant attendance of classes and groups of children. The preponderance of work from Eastern cities was remarked on by visitors and it was felt the various gallery classes should be represented by an equal number of drawings.

Through the co-operation of the Federation of Canadian Artists, drawings by Louis Muhlstock and water-colours by Peter and B. Cogill Haworth have been shown. Both collections were

relative to the war; the former broadly handled, coloured drawings of workers engaged in war industrial plants; the latter sketches, admirable but not always convincing, doubtless due to haste and newness of subject, of airfield activities and of naval subjects made on the Pacific coast.

At present the Manitoba Society of Artists' Annual Exhibition holds the field with the largest show the Society has held. The addition of a Graphic Art Section is a special feature. While the exhibition is marked by much variation both in outlook and motif, there is not much evidence of the disturbing influences of these times. A number of the pictures, however, showing the impact of modernism, give vivacity to the show. Exhibitors from all the Western provinces, including several new painters, provide further interest.

The Regional Branch of the Federation of Canadian Artists is busy, particularly with its scheme to place pictures in Public Schools. With the sponsorship of a group of business men, it now has ready a number of special paintings for this purpose and will shortly complete arrangements for installing the first set. These paintings are by Manitoba artists and deal with the Canadian scene.

A.J.M.

## EDMONTON

### EDMONTON MUSEUM OF ARTS

March is an important month at the Museum of Arts, as for years a selection of the pictures from the Royal Canadian Academy's previous annual exhibition has been hung at this time. Much has already been written on it; it is sound, conservative, with nothing very radical about it and it has been very well received here. In January the work of the Calgary Sketch Club was on view, a large and successful show with much good work in oil and water colour, the latter predominating. In February the Alberta Society of Artists had its exhibition.

These exhibitions have shown that there is a growing desire on the part of the public with modest means to acquire pictures for themselves, and if this can be encouraged and prices kept within their reach, it should do much to forward the arts in the West.

In April water colours by Walter J. Phillips, R.C.A., are to be shown.

It is satisfactory to note that school classes are visiting the Museum in increasing numbers and that much interest is being taken in the work of the Saturday Morning Classes.

The Edmonton Regional Branch of the Federation of Canadian Artists has completed its constitution. The Branch is also considering a proposed "Art Festival" on somewhat new lines of which fuller reports will be given later. The Edmonton Art Club is making preparations for their Spring Exhibition to be held in the Corona Hotel toward the latter part of April.

Arrangements are also under way for holding the Banff School of Fine Arts during August as usual. Further announcements about this will be made in the next issue.

R.W.H.

## WEST COAST

### VANCOUVER

#### VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

During February and March two poster exhibitions were shown in the Art Gallery. The first was of Canadian War Posters designed and printed in Canada. Prizes totalling \$500.00 were awarded to those which, in the opinion of the judges, were considered most likely to help the morale of the workers in war industries. The prize money was contributed by local business men. The first prize of \$100.00 went to "Mayo" for his poster entitled, "I was a victim of careless talk."

The second exhibition consisted of Latin American posters. Apart from subject, the two exhibitions showed a very different outlook, with the palm for design and colour going to the Latin Americans. The Canadian posters were realistic and factual.

Lieut. G. Appelbe Smith, recently serving with the P.P.C.L.I. in Sicily, and now invalided home to Vancouver, has exhibited a small collection of drawings and water colours made while in training in England. Not concerned with war records, he found pleasure in making off-duty sketches of fellow-officers, and the English countryside.

*Drawings by B. C. Binning:* these drawings must be considered as a poetical expression of form, rather than one of imitation. The poetry is lyrical; what Roger Fry calls "the psychological volume" is not of a deeply serious nature. The artist sees people, boats, water and woods holiday-ways, and he expresses himself concerning them in a pen line that meanders and frisks over the surface of the paper with the graceful awkwardness of the young colt. His genuine sense of construction easily makes way for his sense of humour—an impersonal humour.



B. C. BINNING. *A Bird and Binning; Self-portrait*. Pen and ink. On view at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

This is a change from much Canadian art which is inclined to take its subject very seriously. Mr. Binning is genuinely interested in form and pattern, a form lightly dramatised by deforming, and a pattern that partakes of the "spot" or "all-over" variety. What he has done has obviously given him pleasure, and the discerning mind and eye can share that pleasure with him.

The Gallery continues to "hum" as a centre for exhibitions, discussion groups, "painting for pleasure" groups, lectures, musicales for service-men and women, symphony "previews," etc., thus fulfilling its function as an institution for the furtherance of community culture.

The B.C. Artists 1944 Fall Exhibition

will be a "jury show" with the jury to be elected by vote of the Art Gallery Association members and with only B.C. artists eligible for election. This is a departure from former years and is motivated by the idea that artists are the best judges of each other's pictures.

#### ELSEWHERE IN VANCOUVER

Sapper J. L. Shadbolt has recently completed a large mural decoration for the ballroom of the United Services Centre in Vancouver. The murals are ten in number and cover 2,000 sq. feet of wall space. The painting was done directly on the walls in oil paint, in the extraordinary short period of six months —a great accomplishment for one man working almost unaided, except for a little assistance given by Sapper Eric Freifeldt.

For the subject matter of the murals the artist went into the streets of Vancouver and brought back many well known city vistas, flanked by our best western architecture seen through neon shop signs, neon theatre signs, and miles and miles more of neon signs. Through this maze of modern science move the puppets, you and me and the other fellow and his lady. It is all done very realistically, with gusto, satire, artistry and ability. It is Vancouver in war time. The "boys" like it. It solves the problem of trying to be in two places at one time, for you can be dancing inside with a junior hostess in your arms, while life in the streets moves enticingly around you.

The street vistas with their backdrops of mountain and sky are convincingly rendered, while the figures have that touch of caricature wherein one recognizes the human comedy. The general effect of the colour scheme is heavy, and the pattern busy. One could wish that the artist had been given more time for completion of the project in order that the form as a whole might move more easily. It is a notable achievement and an augury of what might be done in Canada in mural painting. C.H.S.

## THE PROBLEM OF DISTORTION

*Continued from page 150*

tion. Three-dimensional forms woven into a textile would destroy the unity of the textile surface, creating an aesthetic conflict between our sense of the fabric as a fabric and our recognition of the objects represented. Furthermore the interweaving of threads which creates a textile could produce the illusion of the third dimension only by the most tortuous complications, and the true artist always avoids tortuous complications, preferring to use his medium simply and naturally. The design is therefore kept flat in this case in order to harmonize it with the conditions of textile weaving.

Similarly the stone-like texture of Fig. 2 is due in part to the fact that this is a fresco painting, made directly on a plaster wall. The character of the plaster surface conditions the forms represented upon it. The loose treatment of forms observed in the water colours on pages 135-36 is a fitting acknowledgment of the fluidity of the water colour medium. In short, each medium of art involves certain effects which are natural and appropriate to it. Instead of neglecting these effects in his concern with nature, the sensitive artist tries to achieve a happy compromise—or better, a significant harmony—between nature and his medium.

4. *Maximum freedom of design.* The grouping of forms in Fig. 3 is arbitrary but nonetheless purposeful. As a result of it, the various lines and shapes and colours take their places in a design or pattern, and this design affords us pleasure through its unity and variety, its repetition and contrast, its symmetry and proportion. Had natural forms been used entirely in a natural way, these qualities could not have been achieved to the same degree. For this reason the artist sometimes modifies natural forms in order to fit them more perfectly into a design scheme.

Design is the chief cause of the distortion in Fig. 1. By conventionalizing the natural forms, the artist has produced

a series of angular shapes which recur through the design like a motif in a musical composition, and to which the minor curves provide a note of contrast. Because these shapes have been organized without reference to perspective, they create a more dynamic interplay, or "rhythm," than they could probably have offered in their natural positions.

Similar in its basic qualities to Fig. 1 is the "abstract" reproduced on page 147, except that here there is even less suggestion of nature and more dependence on purely geometrical design.

To summarize, distortion is frequently found in the art of all periods and can contribute to the value of art by intensifying impressions received from nature, by permitting the expression of imaginative visions, by harmonizing natural forms with art mediums, and by extending the range of design. If we are familiar with a particular form of art through long acquaintance, we take its distortions for granted; in fact we are not conscious of the distortions, but only of the beauty to which they contribute. New forms of art, most of us cannot enjoy at first, and we are likely to blame that fact on distortion. The real reason is more likely to be that we have not yet adjusted our minds to the particular form of harmony which such art offers us. For those with open minds, time has a way of changing reactions of this kind. The seeming discord of today becomes the harmony of tomorrow.

Whether good art is impossible *without* distortion is a question with which we need not concern ourselves. The fact is that much of the world's significant art, both old and new, involves distortion. Hence if we wish to enjoy a wide range of artistic effects, we will do well to accustom ourselves to distortion as rapidly as possible. When we are thoroughly accustomed to it, we can then forget about it and think about more important things.

*Next issue: How High do the Modern "isms" rank as Art?*

# NEW BOOKS ON ART

*Reviewed by the Editor*

BORDUAS. By Robert Elie. 44 pp. Montreal: L'Arbre. 80c.

This volume is the second of a French Canadian series, the *Collection Art Vivant* (Living Art Series), written by various authors under the direction of Maurice Gagnon. In two respects this series fills a gap which has long existed in the literature of Canadian art: it deals with the more distinctively modern Canadian artists and it presents them in a form based on the best contemporary conception of what an art book should be. Consecrated to the artists of today and tomorrow, rather than those of yesterday, it makes art an affair of experiment, enthusiasm, controversy, stimulus and growth—which is a healthy thing for art to be. As to its form, it reverses the traditional combination of a long text accompanied by a few minor illustrations, giving first thought to the illustrations and reducing the text to the scope of a brief introductory essay. This is a combination which busy modern readers enjoy. It is only to be regretted that no English edition of the series exists for the use of those who do not read French.

The present volume, dealing with the personality and work of Paul-Emile Borduas, consists of 20 pages of biographical and critical comment, 20 full page reproductions of Borduas' paintings, and a photograph of the artist. Borduas is one of that small group of French Canadian painters who represent what is perhaps the most intensive modernism to be found in Canadian art. Beginning with post-impressionist forms of modified representation, he passes on to cubist and surrealist periods. His work raises all the questions which have agitated the art world since the earlier of these movements began in Paris thirty or forty years ago. Can art be significant if it does not copy natural reality? Can an art which is obviously European in its sources possess any national significance for a country like Canada? Are the "isms" of permanent significance or merely a passing fad?

Mr. Elie in his introductory essay asserts that there is a metaphysical reality as significant as physical reality and that Borduas' paintings represent this metaphysical reality. As to borrowing from abroad, it must be remembered that at every stage in its history Canadian art has borrowed from abroad—every nation continually borrows in every phase of its life from whatever sources it finds most enriching. The only question is whether we shall work in traditions that were used abroad yesterday or whether we prefer those which are being used today. As to the "isms," we must leave that sub-

ject for fuller treatment in a later issue of *Canadian Art*.

To the present reviewer it seems that, whether or not we are able to share the experience of all the advance guard artists, we owe it to ourselves and to our age to know what they are doing, to meditate the principles and movements which they represent, and to attempt a serious evaluation of the results they obtain. The *Collection Art Vivant* can render us valuable assistance in our effort to fulfill these aims.

## ROMANTIC PAINTING IN AMERICA.

By J. T. Soby and Dorothy C. Miller. 144 pp. New York: Museum of Modern Art. \$2.50.

"Romantic painting," the authors tell us, "represents the temporary triumph of Imagination over Reason in the war between the two which had been openly declared in the 17th century. In historical terms, it commenced to evolve as a formal movement around 1725, reached a climax in the first half of the 19th century and thereafter survived, as it had existed centuries before, as a state of individual mind rather than as a cohesive tendency in art. The themes of romantic art were high in emotional content, passionately expounded and regulated only by instinct . . . ."

As there is something of the romantic in us all, few can fail to be intrigued by this study of American romantic art. To look through the plates alone is a fascinating experience. There are 144 of them, reproducing paintings which begin with Copley in the 18th century, range through a variety of 19th century artists—Allston, Cole, Audubon, Homer, Whistler, and Ryder, to name but a few—and end with contemporary romanticism in the work of such painters as Weber, Grosz, Burchfield, and Gropper. The accompanying text provides a historical survey of the subject, interspersed with frequent interpretative comment.

The recent world has divided much of its attention between a scientific concern for facts, on the one hand, and a constructive regard for "form," or organized relations, on the other. Both these attitudes have tended to exclude the free play of imagination. But imagination, like other vitalities, refuses to be permanently excluded. Modern romanticism is a natural result of this refusal. After the discipline of facts and of form, it offers the mind a refreshing change.

# THE ART FORUM

*This department is open for the expression of opinion on all matters pertaining to art in Canada. The Editors do not assume responsibility for the views expressed.*

## NATIONAL PROGRAM

To the Editor:

The need for a national art magazine in Canada was great and widely felt; unquestionably *Canadian Art* is meeting the need and appreciation of its success is widening in direct proportion to the influence it is increasingly exerting.

I should like strongly to recommend to all who have not already read them, Elizabeth Wyn Wood's "A National Program for the Arts in Canada;" also the fourth and third from the last paragraphs of A. Y. Jackson's article, and the last five paragraphs of Leonard Brooks' article—all contained in the February-March number. Canadian painters and sculptors have for long had much worth while to express in words; that they now have their own vehicle of publication is a matter for great rejoicing.

Miss Wyn Wood's "Program" is comprehensive and excellently expressed. Many artists throughout this continent have been thinking along similar lines for years and many have expressed themselves in writing, but no one has done so as successfully. Miss Wood's "Program" will become recognized as the "general conditions" and standard reference of and for all who crusade to realize the social powers of the arts in Canada. The Federation of Canadian Artists is the extant organization best constituted and able to work towards the implementation of this program and the fulfillment of its aims.

Sincerely,  
FREDERICK B. TAYLOR,  
Vice-President, F.C.A.,  
Montreal, Quebec.

## DISTASTE FOR MODERN ART

To the Editor:

Most people like pictures and are interested in exhibitions, but so much of what is shown today leaves the public cold. We hear the cry, 'Educate the public to appreciate modern painting.' But can you educate a child to like castor oil? It is very salutary on certain occasions. So is modern art when the system is charged with too much Dutch or European or Royal Canadian Academy art, as sometimes happens.

What is modern art? Is it not a passing phase which has to be left to the great judge, Father Time? We may be surprised to find Time laying a gentler hand on some of the decried works of earlier Canadian painters, rather than on the highly lauded futurists and cubists of the present day.

I may say that I am an admirer of many of Mr. Lawren Harris's earlier canvases, as I can wholeheartedly admire Tom Thomson's *Northern River* or Morrice's *Ice Ferry, Quebec*, but I can only look sadly at many of the later works of these gentlemen as a distinct drop from the high ideals of former days to the bizarre and fantastic, if not grotesque, and certainly not as a type to which future Canadians can point with pride as "Canadian art."

Yours truly,  
JAMES E. HARRIS,  
Charlottetown, P.E.I.

*In our view there is no conflict between "earlier Canadian painters" and modern art. The earlier painters lived in an earlier age and painted in an earlier way. They have their accepted place in art. But we today do not live in an "earlier age." We live in the modern period and we can hardly produce something typical of our own time by copying the manner of painters of a previous age. As to the admired earlier works of Lawren Harris, Thomson, and Morrice, it should be remembered that when these works were new, they too were considered "grotesque" by many people. What one generation decries as "fantastic," the next generation often admires.*

—EDITOR.

## DESIRE FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

To the Editor:

I have often wondered where some artists get their ideas when drawing in the style of cubism, futurism, and the other "isms". They say it comes from imagination, intuition, and the inspiration of the subconscious, and they interpret beauty and truth accordingly. When questioned, they ask 'What is truth?' All this may be so, but in a well balanced mind the urges of the subconscious are under the control of consciousness. Should not there be harmony even in thought? Should not an artist check his imagination by his reason?

The ordinary man understands and prefers natural appearances. He gladly accepts symbolism. He appreciates certain phases of abstract art; that is, he knows that there are some shapes and patterns more pleasing than others. But when these are stretched to the extreme, he is bewildered and looks upon the result as a distortion.

The ordinary man needs enlightenment. If these new "isms" are just a blind alley he can

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11. Matisse View from a Window
12. Matisse Family Portrait
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HALIFAX, N.S.

#### APRIL EXHIBITIONS

Wood Carvings by John L. Bradford. Paintings by Modern Russian Artists. Water Colours by Jack Humphrey.

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Group show by Bowen, Hodgekinson and Wainwright. Water Colours by Leonard Brooks, A.R.C.A. Selected Maritime Paintings.

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J. S. CROCKETT,  
Walkerville, Ont.

In response to the interesting questions raised above, and similar demands from other readers, we are beginning in this issue a series of articles on the understanding of art. In the second of the series, to be published in our next issue, we shall attempt to answer Mr. Crockett's question on the relative importance of the "isms." —EDITOR

## EXHIBITION STANDARDS

To the Editor:

It would be interesting to read the views of readers of *Canadian Art* on the subject of whether an exhibition jury should not accept and hang all the paintings submitted to it which are up to "exhibition standard."

This question arises out of the experience of artists who have a painting accepted, for example, by the Royal Canadian Academy and then have the same picture turned down by the Montreal Spring Exhibition, or vice versa.

Such happenings often lower the prestige of the artist in the eyes of his patrons. To say to the patron that the picture was not to the taste of that particular jury does not remove the patron's fear that it may be an inferior work. As most Canadian artists know, patrons and purchasers of paintings are not too numerous.

Yours sincerely,  
E. L. CANN,  
Yarmouth, N.S.

## SATISFACTION

To the Editor:

Am very pleased to see a real Canadian art magazine advancing. It seems I have spent so much time reading art magazines from abroad and now to have something representing the efforts of my own country and friends is a new incentive to put more effort into creative work myself and to interest others in doing so. I get quite a thrill out of being able to refer in conversation to "our Canadian art magazine."

Cordially yours,  
E. FRYER,  
Winnipeg, Man.

## THE ACADEMY AND THE FUTURE

Continued from page 141

Gallery, and greater provision for wider exchange of exhibitions with other countries.

d. Measures for the integration of Canadian art with industry; the protection and encouragement of native handicrafts; and the incorporation of the products of Canadian artists in suitable public works.

Any machinery set up by the Academy must be completely non-partisan in character; an affair of co-operation rather than of domination. The Academy must therefore:

- a. Define its own proposals on progressive and disinterested lines as an earnest of its good faith.
- b. Invite the collaboration, on equal terms, of established art organizations throughout Canada, in committees to discover, first, the maximum portion of the program on which all artists are agreed and, second, to frame and adjust its details to suit the political processes through which they may be put into operation.
- c. Employ such influence as it has, for the attainment of the common good.

By such a policy, the Academy might well recover its old dignity and the respect it now seems to be losing. The welfare of the Academy, and indeed of every artist and his organizations, depends on how boldly the real issues facing them are tackled.

Progress has been frustrated too long by the squabbling, about minor matters, of mutually exclusive groups; the time for boycotting and sniping at each other has gone. A new unity of purpose must animate artists, if substance is to be given to the vision of a Canadian art "of the people, for the people, and by the people."

### ITALIAN FRONT

*Continued from page 153*

breakfast he goes to the Ops lorry and gets a map co-ordinate of the unit he has planned to visit. If he has no personal transport, he sees the "I" officer, or some other understanding official and begs a ride to his destination. Into the vehicle go his folio of papers, his board and easel, his stool, his haversack, his water-bottle, his tin-hat. On location he reports to Command Post, explains his duties and starts his reconnaissance. In a peacetime situation this is the critical initial phase that precedes the making of an outdoor sketch. In advance areas in wartime it is a different matter. It is still critical, but in more ways than one.

We are fighting a devilishly ingenious enemy. He uses Teller mines, antipersonnel "S" mines, and "booby-traps" to catch just such unwary people as war artists. You may trip over a wire, open a door or pick up an attractive looking souvenir and do so for the last time. So the war artist on his "recce" (reconnaissance) has two things in mind: (a) his personal safety; (b) the discovery of the most interesting and effective way to present the subject of his interest. Once settled in a desirable location, he then "recce's" a nearby slit trench or shell hole where he might take cover should it be

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necessary, and I assure you it is, at all hours of the day and night.

Imminent danger may disclose itself in many ways. For instance, he might suddenly hear the spectral whinny of a shell. The burst might be several hundred yards away and he continues his work. Suddenly there will be a loud whistle followed by a nearby "crump"; this is the signal to down tools and make for cover. The alarm may be the result of air action. The air is continually alive with our own craft but occasionally MEs or FWs dive from the clouds surrounded by "ack ack" bursts and tracer bullets. Down they come with funny little black crosses on their wings, and then come the bombs. The war artist is again in cover and remains there until the action is over. Our days are never dull, never without interest, never without excitement. What we do under these conditions is not what might be done in the contemplative quiet of a studio, but we are getting the raw material, the eye-witness experience that should, if we are worth our salt, give authority to whatever we may eventually do in relation to this experience.

The materials employed have been more or less dictated by the fact that we must be prepared to move at a moment's notice, and be prepared to carry our own equipment. We have the use of transport of course, but the fundamental idea is to be independent and capable of moving on one's own behalf. Light water colour equipment is therefore the answer. I carry a three-ply drawing board, a collapsible field sketching easel, a small stool, and make most of my water colours 14½" x 21". For rapid notes I have a military map case in which I carry sketch books and pencils. There is much that I would like to do in oils. I can always make a more precise statement in oils, but it is out of the question here at present. No doubt the Naval personnel, housed on a comfortable ship, will have greater opportunity to use that medium. We have been fortunate in Italy in securing some stocks of Fabriano paper. Although I much prefer the English hand-made papers, Fabriano is an excellent paper and when other papers are in short supply we are employing it.

I learn from London that Sir Kenneth Clark and the trustees of the National Gallery are providing a room in the National Gallery for an exhibition of Canadian war art. This sounds like an interesting plan for the assembly and presentation of our work. I hope that plans are also afoot in Canada for the exhibition of our work at home. All of it has been done under difficult, exciting circumstances. All of it has been done, not so much with the idea of producing sensational experiments in painting, but rather of producing simple documentary statements of the magnificent part being played in this campaign by Canada's Army.



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## CONTRIBUTORS

**L.A.C. Panton** is Director of Art at the Northern Vocational School in Toronto. He is qualified by intimate experience to discuss the relations of the Academy to other Canadian art organizations. He is a member, not only of the Academy itself, but of a number of the country's other leading societies, and has served at various times as president of the Ontario Society of Artists, secretary of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, and Ontario chairman of the Federation of Canadian Artists. Examples of Mr. Panton's paintings are to be found in most Canadian art galleries.

**Yvonne McKague Housser, A.R.C.A.**, is a member of the Canadian Group of Painters and the Ontario Society of Artists, and an instructor at the Ontario College of Art. Ever since her student days under J. E. H. MacDonald and other members of the Group of Seven, Mrs. Housser has been in close touch with progressive art activities in Canada. Her late husband, F. B. Housser, was the author of *A Canadian Art Movement*. Her own work is represented in the collections of Hart House, the Art Gallery of Toronto, and the National Gallery. Mrs. Housser resides at Thornhill, Ont.

In peace time, **Charles F. Comfort, R.C.A.**, is Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Toronto, instructor in mural painting at the Ontario College of Art, and versatile artist whose work includes commercial design, easel painting, mural painting, and decorative sculpture. Capt. Comfort's last major project before entering the army to become one of Canada's official war artists, was to design the sculptured reliefs which now decorate the concourse of the Dorchester St. Station, Montreal.

## ART BROADCASTS

A series of four broadcasts on *Art and Democracy* will be given over the national network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Sunday evenings at 6.30 EDT, May 7 to 28 inclusive. The speaker is to be Walter Abell, editor of *Canadian Art*.

## COMING EXHIBITIONS

**SASKATOON ART ASSOCIATION.** Annual Spring Exhibition. May 8-15 at the Hudson Bay Auditorium, Saskatoon. Closing date for entries April 29th. 6 paintings and 4 examples of design or graphic art may be submitted by any Canadian artist. Entry fee \$1; catalogue and reviews sent free to exhibitors. Entry forms and information obtainable from Miss S. Anderson, 718 McPherson Ave., Saskatoon.

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